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INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3509  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 4910  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 5890  
RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 3846  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0777  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1058

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000083

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [MO](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCO: UPSET ABOUT GAZA BLOCKADE BUT SUPPORTIVE  
AT ARAB LEAGUE

REF: STATE 7377

Classified By: POLCOUNS Craig M. Karp for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: MFA U/Sec-level DG Azeroual, responsible for Arab Affairs, told us that Morocco would work behind the scenes at the Arab League Ministerial for a moderate statement, and would succeed. He underscored, however, that the cut-off of essential supplies to Gaza was unacceptable and amounted to collective punishment of the innocent civilian population. Morocco had been forced to take a strong public stance by rising popular concern, accompanied by growing protests. He urged the USG to ensure the embargo is lifted. On Lebanon, he said the Government of Morocco (GOM) will quietly cooperate with the Saudis at the Ministerial to increase pressure on Syria to allow Lebanon to move forward on the presidency. Despite good intentions, we believe that GOM delegation, headed by inexperienced State Secretary, would probably make little difference at the

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League meeting. End Summary.

12. (C) January 25, 2008, Polcouns delivered reftel demarche on the January 27 Arab League Ministerial Meeting to the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General for International Affairs Mohammed Azeroual, who covers the Arab and Islamic world. Azeroual noted that the GOM delegation in Cairo would be led by Secretary of State Ahmed Lakhrif, as the Minister, now in Senegal, would be preparing for his trip to Washington. (Note: Local press has recently related unhappiness among Arab diplomats in Rabat over the Foreign Minister's perceived neglect of the Arab World, particularly relative to former Minister Benaissa, who covered Arab and third world countries under their previous division of labor.)

Gaza

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13. (C) In response to the demarche, Azeroual said the USG need not worry about a strong statement coming out of the Arab League Ministerial. Morocco would be a moderating force. Azeroual surmised that Egypt would also likely moderate any ministerial statement coming out of the Ministerial on Gaza.

14. (C) Azeroual said the current situation in Gaza was tragic--"with the 1.5 million people being punished collectively." He urged that the USG convince Israel that the blockade was counterproductive to the peace process.

Azeroual cautioned that it will be impossible to bring down Hamas either by holding the civilian population hostage with a blockade nor by force of arms because Hamas is made up of fanatics who thrive on violence and will only be further motivated by the sacrifices of their community. He advised the way to defeat Hamas was to advance the Middle East peace process with President Abbas through credible negotiations, lauding the progress made in Annapolis as a good start. Morocco continues to be against Hamas, and he repeated its rejection of receiving Hamas at any level.

15. (C) Azeroual noted that Morocco was under considerable public pressure over the civilian privations daily replayed on international Arab media. There had been several demonstrations, including one near the U.S. Consulate in Casablanca, and they are steadily growing. Both the MFA and the government had been forced to come up with strong statements criticizing the Israeli blockade. He surmised that Egypt too was concerned about its own population; that the media coverage of the suffering civilians in Gaza might incite violence in Egypt.

16. (U) On January 24, Communications Minister and Government Spokesman Mr. Khalid Naciri publicly denounced Israel's closing of the border with Gaza. He asserted that Israel was in violation of international humanitarian law, and appealed to the United Nations Human Rights Council for redress. The statement, issued after a government cabinet meeting that likely endorsed its contents, ratcheted up criticism of Israel from a January 23 MFA communique. The statement protested "the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza due to the iniquitous blockade imposed by the Israeli authorities", in clear violation of the provisions of humanitarian international law and charters." The MFA stressed that the situation in Gaza "could abort the

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hopes of raised by the Annapolis Conference." It said the GOM would "make urgent efforts at the international level and in the United Nations, in conjunction with the Arab and Islamic groups to definitively and completely lift the blockade."

17. (SBU) In addition to the demonstration at Consulate Casablanca mentioned by Azeroual, there have been a number of still small, but growing public protests here, and we expect a large demonstration Sunday January 27 (the day of the league meeting).

Lebanon  
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18. (C) On Lebanon, Azeroual said that the GOM supported the presidential election process moving forward. He said that we should not worry about any unhelpful statement coming out of the Arab League on Lebanon. Saudi Arabia was pushing the Syrians hard, to stop blocking the presidency. Morocco was working quietly in its support.

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